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BEGINS
05.03.06
Friendly Neighborhood
SPIDER-MAN
R! K! M! '05!

LAST MONTH IN

Friendly Neighborhood SPIDER-MAN

Peter Parker has had a lot to adjust to recently:

His death and rebirth. Strange powers. And a new costume designed for him by Tony Stark, a.k.a. Iron Man.

However, there are some aspects of Peter's life that are regressing to the way they were before. His friend, Flash Thompson, has awoken from a coma and reverted to the bully he used to be in high school, completely forgetting that he and Peter were best friends for many years.

And J. Jonah Jameson, whose hate for Spider-Man was assuaged after Peter Parker convinced him that his own son, John Jameson, was actually the famous web-slinger, has now realized that Peter intentionally misled him. To get even, he has agreed to fund a charity wrestling match between Spider-Man and an enigmatic wrestler known only as El Muerto.

El Muerto's past is a mystery to most, but it is said that a mystical wrestling god known as El Dorado murdered his father and promised to take his life next if he did not best a champion fighter and claim his mask.

During the match, El Muerto's strength and determination were almost enough to unmask Spider-Man, but at the crucial moment, a poisonous stinger reflexively sprung from the wall-crawler's wrist and injured the wrestler...

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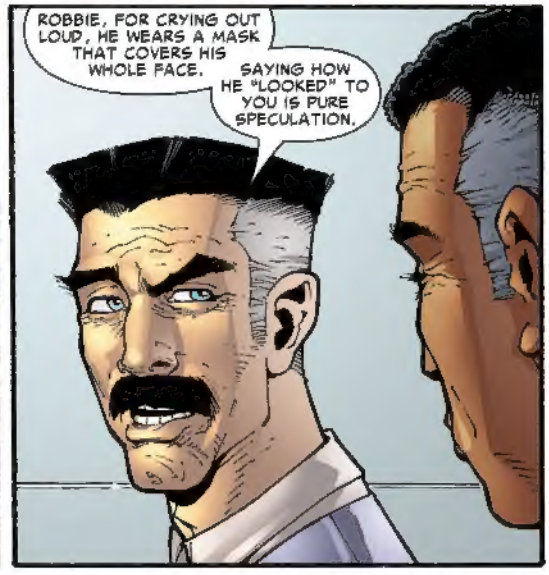
MASKS

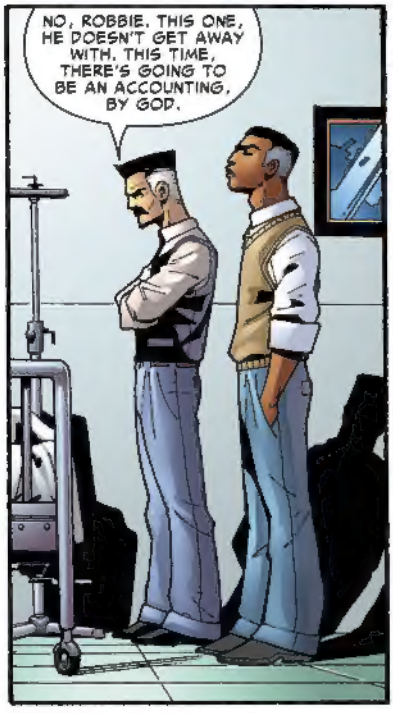
PART 2 OF 2

PETER DAVID, WRITER | ROGER CRUZ, PENCILER | VICTOR OLAZABA, INKER | CHRIS SOTOMAYOR, COLORS | VC'S CORY PETIT, LETTERER | MICHAEL O'CONNOR, ASSISTANT EDITOR | AXEL ALONSO, EDITOR | JOE QUESADA, EDITOR IN CHIEF | DAN BUCKLEY, PUBLISHER

I'LL FRY THE WALL-CRAWLER FOR THIS, ROBBIE, I SWEAR.
SHOVING A POISONED SPEAR INTO AN OPPONENT'S LEG WHEN HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS GOING DOWN...OF ALL THE DIRTY, UNDERHANDED...

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, JONAH, IT LOOKED TO ME AS IF SPIDER-MAN WAS AS SURPRISED AS ANYBODY.


ROBBIE, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, HE WEARS A MASK THAT COVERS HIS WHOLE FACE.
SAYING HOW HE "LOOKED" TO YOU IS PURE SPECULATION.

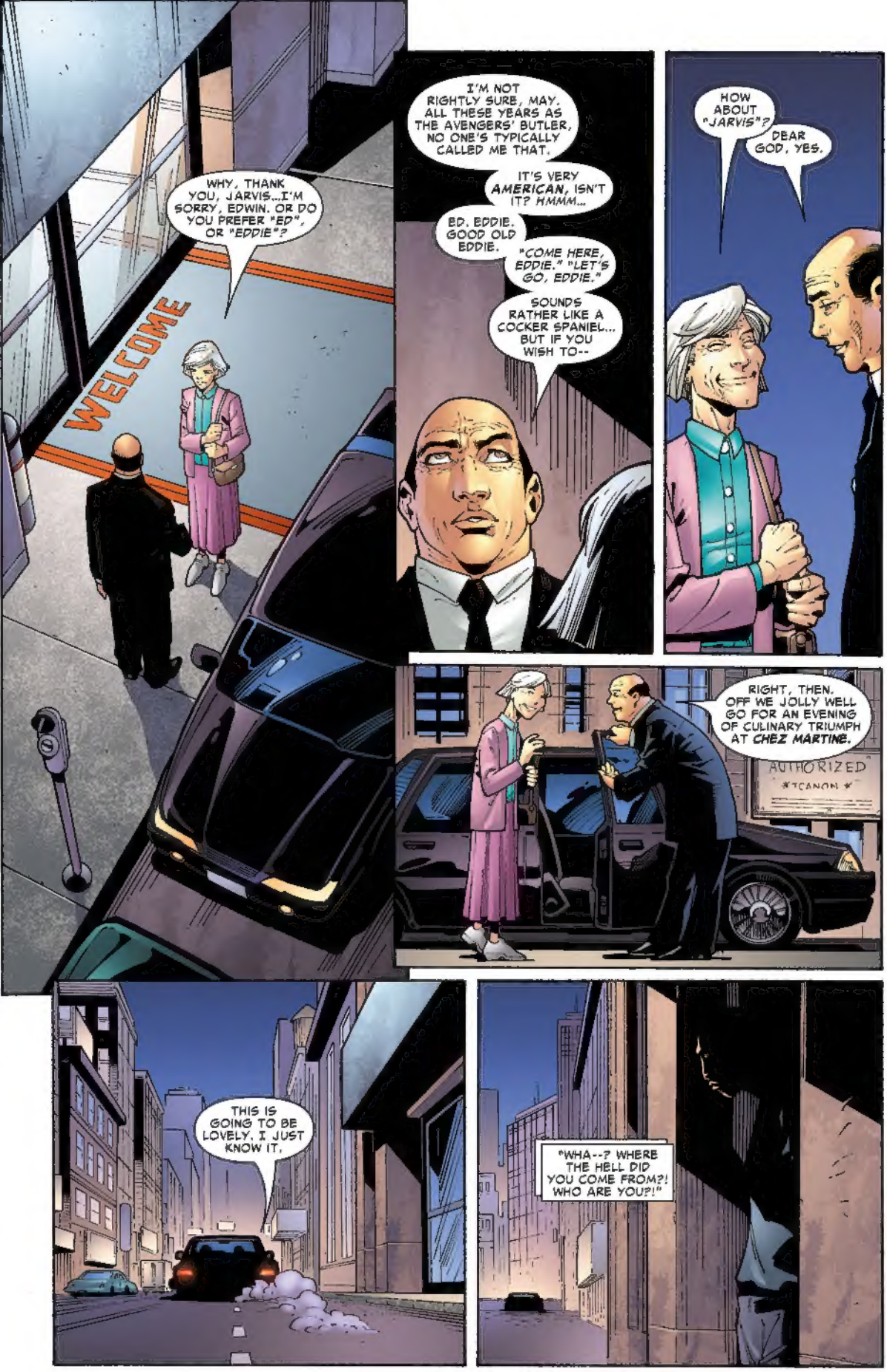

NO, ROBBIE. THIS ONE, HE DOESN'T GET AWAY WITH. THIS TIME, THERE'S GOING TO BE AN ACCOUNTING, BY GOD.

IS IT GETTING DARKER IN HERE?
"A....TOTEM? SERIOUSLY?"

SERIOUSLY.
AND YOU THINK I'M CRAZY, DON'T YOU? THIS WHOLE NOTION OF A LINE OF SPIDER-MEN...
...AND THE ACCIDENT THAT GAVE ME MY POWERS ISN'T AN ACCIDENT AT ALL...
...AND MY WHOLE "DEATH AND REBIRTH" AND THE STINGER ALL BEING RELATED TO THE...
...THE...
I KNOW IT SOUNDS IDIOTIC. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT SCIENCE AND MAGIC COULD BE COMMINGLED LIKE TH--
LOOK! OVER THERE!
IT'S DOCTOR STRANGE'S ECTOPLASMIC FORM, DELIVERING A WOMAN'S BABY!
WHAT? WHERE!? DOES HE NEED OUR HEL--
OH, YOU'RE A RIOT, STARK...
YOU'RE SO FUNNY, YOU SHOULD BE ON THE STAGE. IN FACT, THERE'S--
--ONE LEAVING IN FIVE MINUTES. OLD JOKE.

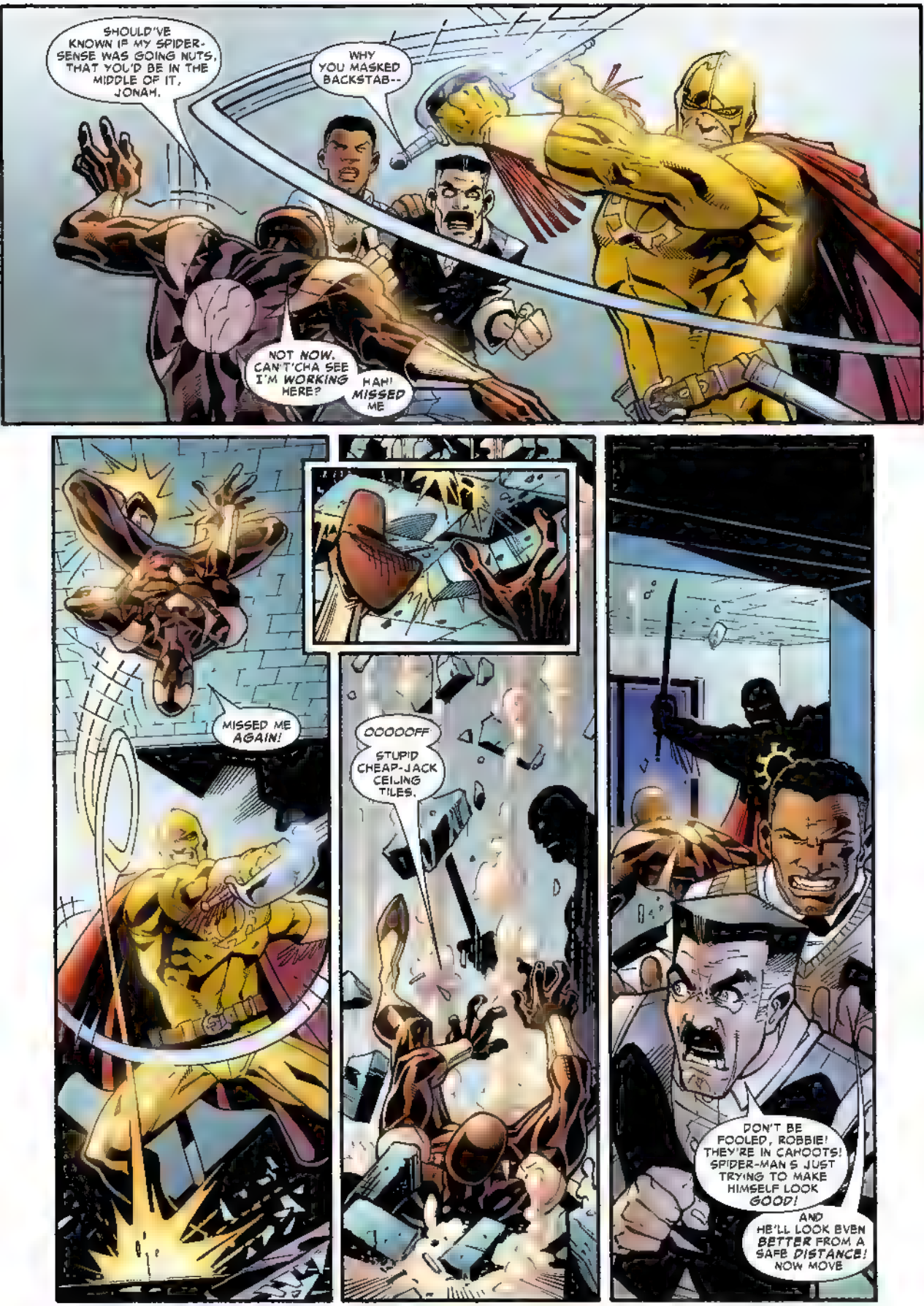
LOOK, PETER, EXPLORING THIS "TOTEM" BUSINESS DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE ABANDONING SCIENCE. WHAT ELSE IS SCIENCE BUT INVESTIGATION?
ONCE UPON A TIME, THE BEST KNOWLEDGE MAN HAD WAS THAT THE SUN MOVED ACROSS THE SKY BECAUSE THE GODS PULLED IT WITH A CHARIOT, OR IT WAS CHASED BY A WOLF.
THEN NEWTON DEVELOPED LAWS THAT "POSITIVELY" DETERMINED HOW THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE WORKED... UNTIL IT WAS FOUND HIS "LAWS" DIDN'T APPLY TO SUBATOMICS. BOOM: QUANTUM MECHANICS WAS BORN.
SCIENTISTS LOOK FOR PATTERNS IN THE CHAOS, FROM WHICH THEY DRAW CONCLUSIONS.
SO WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CREATED YOU PART OF SOME GRAND SCHEME RATHER THAN HAPPENSTANCE?
WELL...WHY NOT? PEOPLE ALWAYS CLAIM THINGS HAPPEN "FOR A REASON." MAYBE THAT REASON HAS RULES TO BE DISCOVERED IN A PUZZLING NEW FIELD.
"QUANDARY MECHANICS?"
I LIKE IT.
BOTTOM LINE, MAYBE SCIENCE AND MAGIC AREN'T MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. MAYBE THEY'RE DIFFERENT WAYS OF APPROACHING THE SAME CONCEPT: HOW THINGS WORK.
SO THEY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EQUALLY? ONE NOT ELEVATED OVER THE OTHER?
I'M SAYING AS SCIENTISTS, WE SHOULD CONSIDER ALL OPTIONS.
SO INTELLIGENT DESIGN SHOULD BE GIVEN THE SAME WEIGHT AS EVOLUTION?
...
OKAY, I'M GOING HOME NOW.
WE'LL RUN TESTS ON YOUR "STINGER" APPENDAGE AFTER YOU'RE DONE VISITING YOUR WRESTLER FRIEND. SEE WHAT MAKES IT TICK.
BUT...WAIT! YOU DIDN'T ANSWER ABOUT EVOLUT--
LA LA LA, I'M NOT LISTENING, LA, LA, LA...

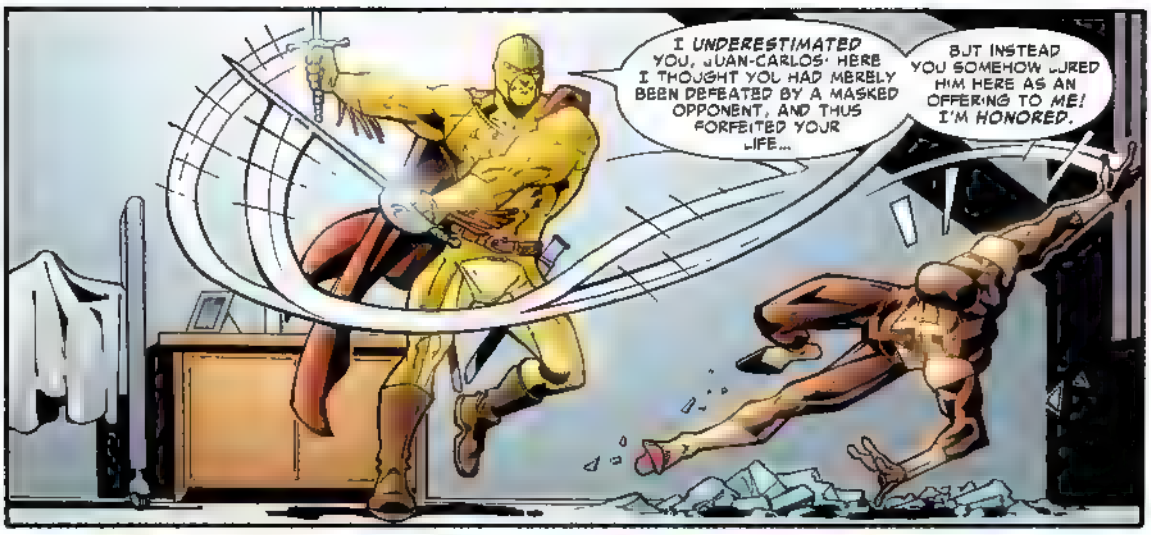
¿D-DONDE ESTOY...?
HE'S ASKING WHERE HE IS.
I KNOW THAT, ROBBIE. IN HIGH SCHOOL, I TOOK THREE YEARS OF SPANISH I.
YOU'RE AT A NEW YORK CITY HOSPITAL, EL MUERTO. SPIDER-MAN CHEATED IN YOUR MATCH.
HE INJECTED SOME SORT OF "POISON" INTO YOUR BLOODSTREAM. NOTHING TOXIC, APPARENTLY, BUT ENOUGH TO PARALYZE YOU TEMPORARILY.
THEN HE SLUNG YOU OVER HIS SHOULDER LIKE A SIDE OF BEEF AND RUSHED YOU HERE...
PROBABLY TO ASSUAGE HIS GUILTY CONSCIENCE.
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING. YOU'RE UNDER THE FINEST CARE HERE, AND PERFECTLY SAFE.
YOU HAVE MY WORD ON THAT.
"WELL, DON'T YOU LOOK LOVELY..."

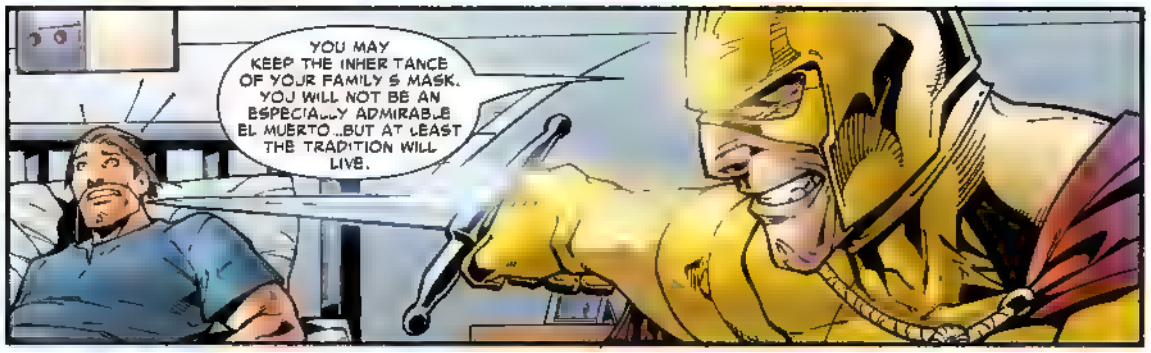

WHY, THANK YOU, JARVIS...I'M SORRY, EDWIN. OR DO YOU PREFER "ED", OR "EDDIE"?
WELCOME
I'M NOT RIGHTLY SURE, MAY. ALL THESE YEARS AS THE AVENGERS' BUTLER, NO ONE'S TYPICALLY CALLED ME THAT.
IT'S VERY AMERICAN, ISN'T IT? HMMM...
ED. EDDIE. GOOD OLD EDDIE.
"COME HERE, EDDIE." "LET'S GO, EDDIE."
SOUNDS RATHER LIKE A COCKER SPANIEL... BUT IF YOU WISH TO--
HOW ABOUT "JARVIS"?
DEAR GOD, YES.
RIGHT, THEN. OFF WE JOLLY WELL GO FOR AN EVENING OF CULINARY TRIUMPH AT CHEZ MARTINE.
AUTHORIZED
CANON
THIS IS GOING TO BE LOVELY. I JUST KNOW IT.
"WHA--? WHERE THE HELL DID YOU COME FROM?! WHO ARE YOU?!"

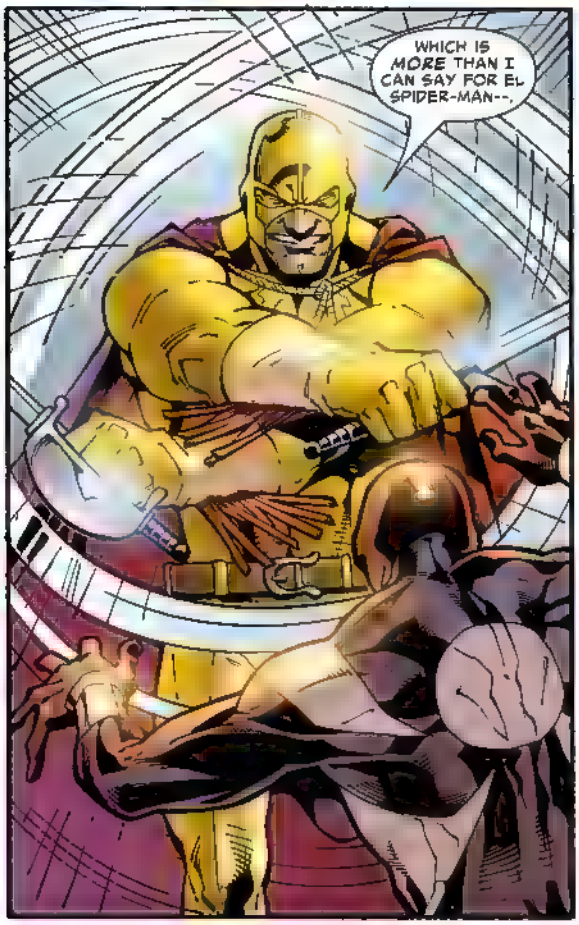
SINCE YOU ASKED...I AM EL DORADO.
STEP ASIDE OR DIE.
HE'S HERE FOR ME!
HE'S HERE TO BE KILLING ME! I KNOW THIS!
CALM DOWN! NO ONE'S KILLING ANYONE!
NOW SEE HERE, YOU GOLD-PLATED GARBANZO!
JONAH, ANTAGONIZING THE LARGE HOMICIDAL MAN MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION.
IT'S UNDER CONTROL, ROBBIE, DON'T WORRY.
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID DURING UNION NEGOTIATIONS IN '96, AND WE WOUND UP PICKETED FOR THREE MONTHS.
BAH! SOME TWO-BIT RIVAL WRESTLER DOESN'T SCARE ME! AS FOR YOU...
I'M J. JONAH JAMESON! PUBLISHER OF THE DAILY BUGLE. WHOEVER YOU ARE, I CAN DEMOLISH YOUR WRESTLING REPUTATION WITH A SINGLE EDITORIAL! IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD...
THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.
OH, I'VE HEARD...
I'VE JUST NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO TEST THAT THEORY.

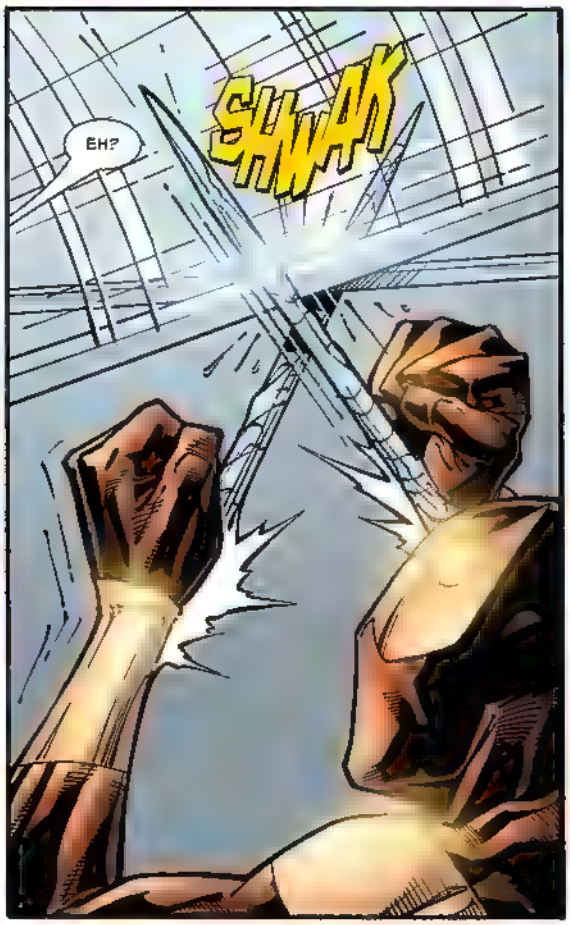
WH-WHERE'D THOSE COME FROM?!
TOLEDO, SPAIN.
HERE: EXAMINE IT MORE CLOSELY...
STAND ASIDE, EVERYBODY!
DRAMATIC ENTRANCE COMING THROUGH!

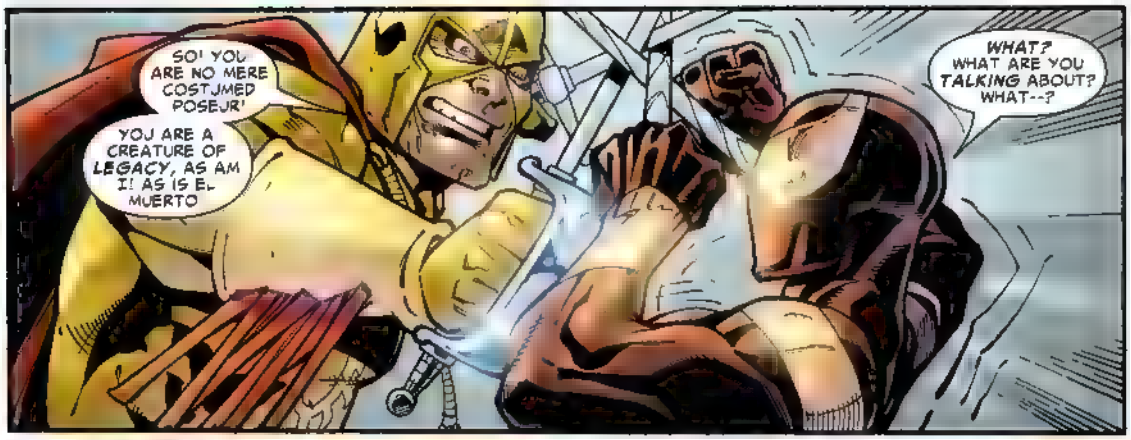

SHOULD'VE KNOWN IF MY SPIDER-SENSE WAS GOING NUTS, THAT YOU'D BE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT, JONAH.
WHY YOU MASKED BACKSTAB--
NOT NOW. CAN'T'CHA SEE I'M WORKING HERE?
HAH! MISSED ME
MISSED ME AGAIN!
OOOOOFF
STUPID CHEAP-JACK CEILING TILES.
DON'T BE FOOLED, ROBBIE! THEY'RE IN CAHOOTS! SPIDER-MAN'S JUST TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF LOOK GOOD!
AND HE'LL LOOK EVEN BETTER FROM A SAFE DISTANCE! NOW MOVE

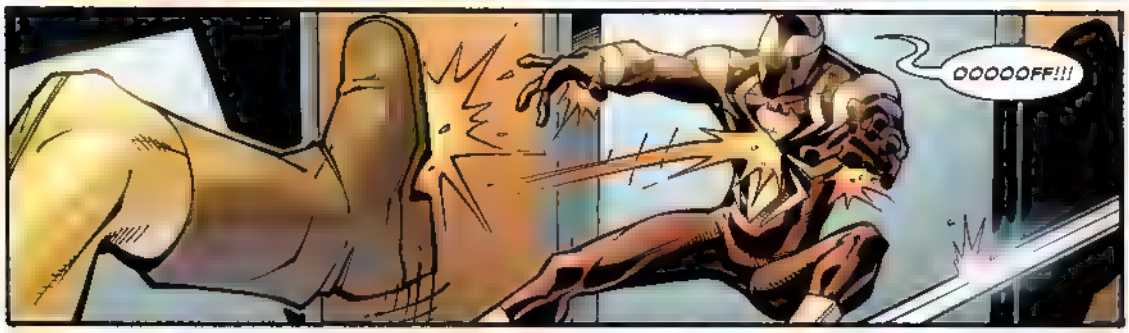

I UNDERESTIMATED YOU, JUAN-CARLOS. HERE I THOUGHT YOU HAD MERELY BEEN DEFEATED BY A MASKED OPPONENT, AND THUS FORFEITED YOUR LIFE...
BUT INSTEAD YOU SOMEHOW LURED HIM HERE AS AN OFFERING TO ME! I'M HONORED.


YOU MAY KEEP THE INHERITANCE OF YOUR FAMILY'S MASK. YOU WILL NOT BE AN ESPECIALLY ADMIRABLE EL MUERTO...BUT AT LEAST THE TRADITION WILL LIVE.

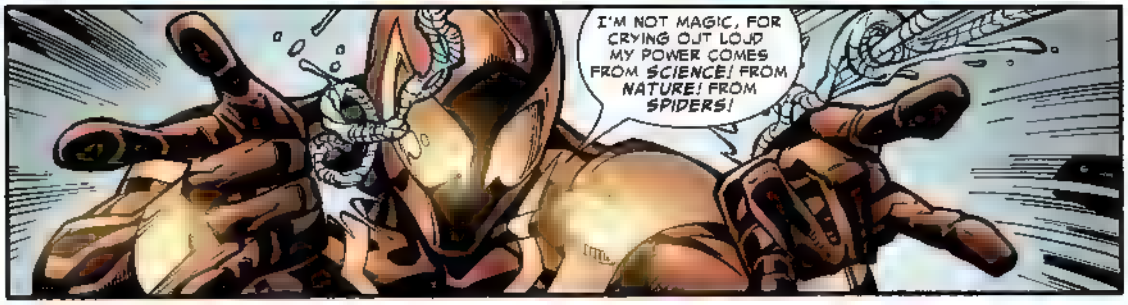

WHICH IS MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR EL SPIDER-MAN--.

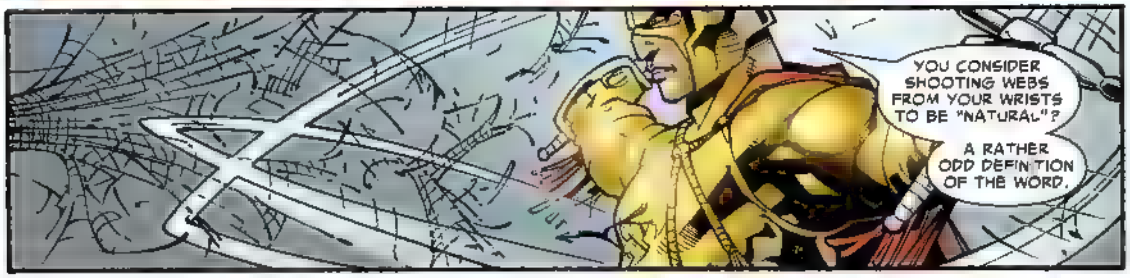

EH?
SHWAK

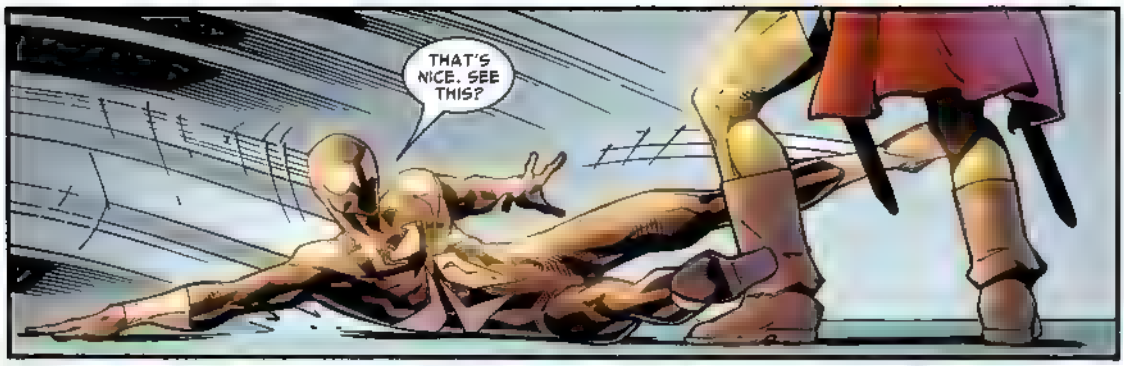

SO! YOU ARE NO MERE COSTUMED POSEUR!
YOU ARE A CREATURE OF LEGACY, AS AM I! AS IS EL MUERTO
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT--?


OOOOOFF!!!

IS THIS SOME SORT OF JEST? DO YOU PRETEND NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE?
YOU THINK I CANNOT DETECT THE MAGIC THAT INFESTS SUCH DEFENSES?


I'M NOT MAGIC, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD MY POWER COMES FROM SCIENCE! FROM NATURE! FROM SPIDERS!

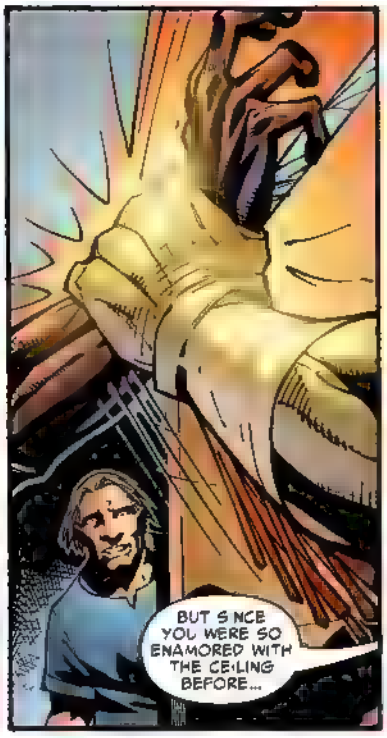

YOU CONSIDER SHOOTING WEBS FROM YOUR WRISTS TO BE "NATURAL"?
A RATHER ODD DEFINITION OF THE WORD.

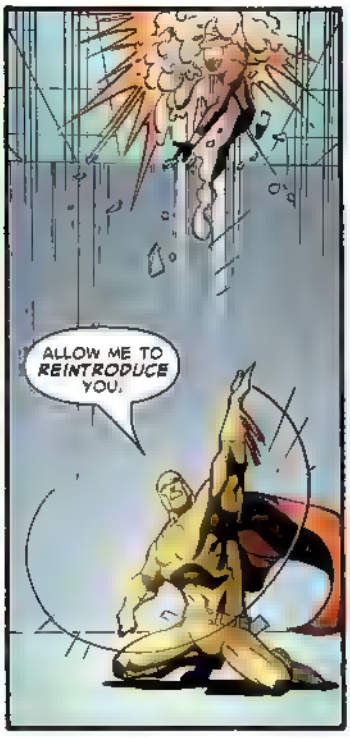

THAT'S NICE. SEE THIS?

THIS IS ME NOT *CARING* WHAT YOU THINK
I DON'T NEED THOSE STUPID STINGERS TO STOP Y--

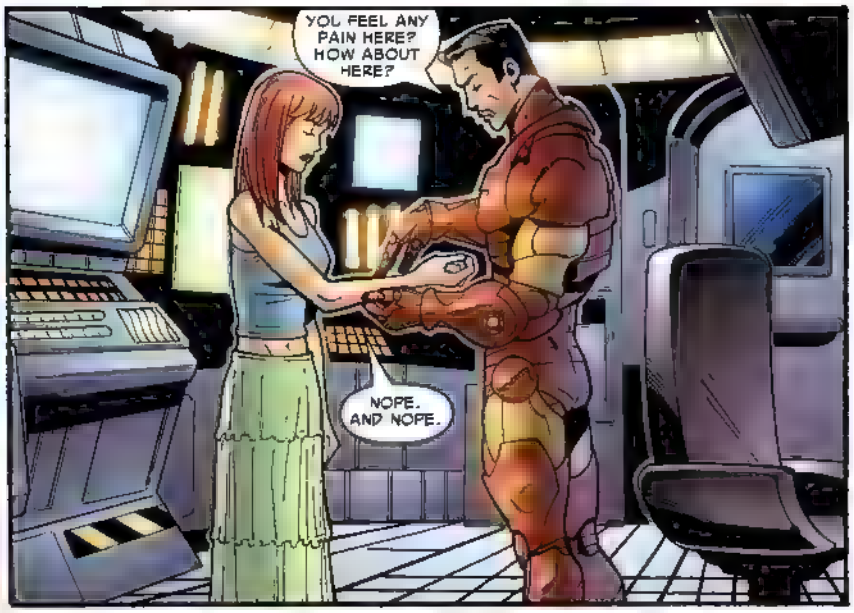
NUTS!

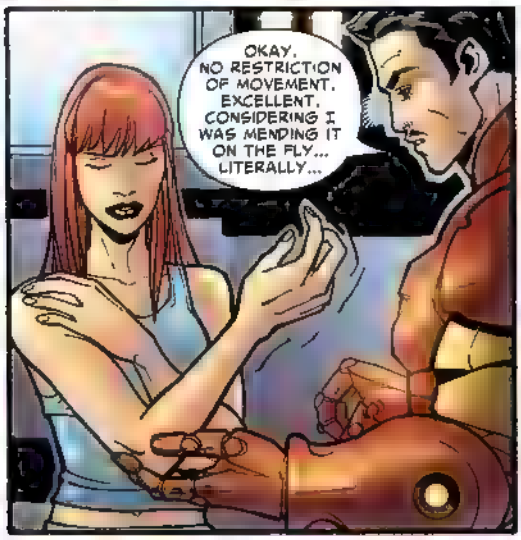
DON'T CONCERN YOURSELF. EVEN *WITH* THEM, YOU CAN'T STOP ME.
MY MYSTICAL GOLD ARMOR CAN DEFLECT ANY POWER, MAGIC OR *OTHERWISE.*


BUT SINCE YOU WERE SO ENAMORED WITH THE CEILING BEFORE...


ALLOW ME TO *REINTRODUCE* YOU.

OKAY, MARY JANE, EXTEND YOUR ARM.

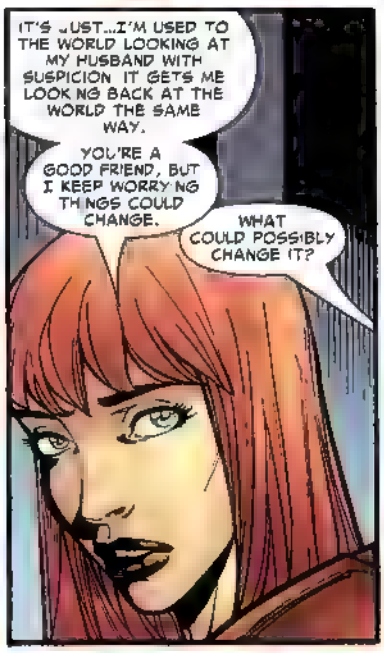

YOU FEEL ANY PAIN HERE? HOW ABOUT HERE?
NOPE. AND NOPE.


OKAY. NO RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT. EXCELLENT. CONSIDERING I WAS MENDING IT ON THE FLY... LITERALLY...

YOU'D NEVER EVEN KNOW IT WAS BROKEN. IT'S AMAZING. AND YOU FIXED IT WITH STUFF YOU HAD ON YOU.
I ALSO HAVE A BUILT-IN LIPOSUCTION DEVICE, AND AN ONBOARD DESSERT CART
WELL GREAT I COULD FIX A BUN AND THEN HAVE MY BUNS FIXED.

YOU NEVER TOLD ME THE EXACT CIRCUMSTANCES OF HOW IT BROKE.
YOU NEVER ASKED.
I WAS WAITING FOR YOU TO VOLUNTEER IT.
OH WELL.
MARY JANE?

EVER SINCE THAT NONSENSE WHEN THE PRESS THOUGHT YOU WERE MY GIRLFRIEND, YOU'VE SEEMED A LITTLE... GUARDED...WITH ME.
THE SOONER YOU REALIZE I'M ON YOUR SIDE, THE BETTER.


IT'S JUST...I'M USED TO THE WORLD LOOKING AT MY HUSBAND WITH SUSPICION. IT GETS ME LOOKING BACK AT THE WORLD THE SAME WAY.
YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND, BUT I KEEP WORRYING THINGS COULD CHANGE.
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY CHANGE IT?

"I DON'T KNOW. THAT'S WHAT'S WORRYING ME."
STRANGE THAT YOU WOULD DENY THE MAGIC THAT FLOWS IN YOU, SPIDER-MAN!
YOU SPOKE OF A "SPIDER-SENSE" WARNING YOU OF DANGER... AND LEADING YOU TO IT. I KNOW OF NO SUCH NATURAL ABILITY IN SPIDERS.
BUT I POSSESS TRACKING SENSES JUST AS YOU... SENSES THAT TELL ME YOU HAVE FLED TO...
LABORATORY
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
...HERE!
THE WEAPONS IN YOUR ARMS APPEAR IN RESPONSE TO THREATS FROM SUCH AS EL MUERTO, WHO IS PART OF A MYSTIC CHAIN OF INHERITED POWER...
...OR MYSELF...
...WHO EXISTS TO BREAK THAT CHAIN.
C'mon, c'mon, keep yapping, just another few seconds...

I ALSO HEAR QUITE WELL.
LET HIM BE!
EH?
HMM...SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO RANT SOME MORE? IT WAS REALLY NICE. VERY OLD-SCHOOL.
YOUR FIGHT IS WITH ME! IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
IF I'M NOT WORTHY OF THE MAGIC...ANOTHER SHOULD NOT TO BE DYING IN MY PLACE!
WELL WELL! I DIDN'T KNOW THAT IN AMERICAN HOSPITALS, THEY COULD GROW SPINES...!
IF YOU'D BEEN THIS WAY EARLIER, I MIGHT NOT HAVE KILLED YOUR FATHER.

YOU ARE NOT FIT TO MAKE MENTION OF HIM, MURDERER!
I AM TIRED OF LIVING WITH YOUR JUDGMENTS.
YOU ARE NOT FIT TO EXIST! TO TORMENT OUR FAMILY, GENERATION AND GENERATION...
WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?
LUCKILY, I CAN ATTEND TO THAT.

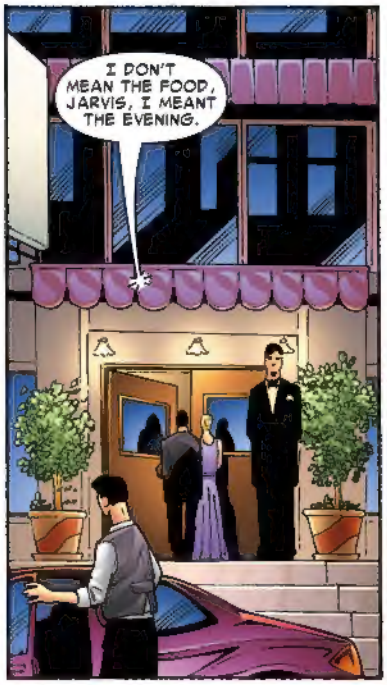
ARHHHH!
WHAT CHANGED YOUR MIND, JUAN-CARLOS?
WAS IT THAT, ONCE I SET YOU FREE OF YOUR OBLIGATION, AND YOU NO LONGER HAD TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN FEAR...
...YOU SUDDENLY SAW HOW PATHETIC YOU HAD BEEN AND DECIDED TO ASPIRE TO GREATER?
HERE I THOUGHT I'D BEEN DOING YOU A FAVOR... AND INSTEAD I DOOMED YOU, INSPIRING YOU TO FUTILE HEROICS.
OH, THEY WEREN'T FUTILE.

THEY GAVE ME THE TIME I NEEDED TO FINISH *THIS*.
ACKKKHH!!
WHAT...WHAT DID YOU THINK THAT WOULD ACCOMP--
WAIT! WHAT'S HAPPEN--?
MAGIC IS FINE IF THAT'S *ALL* YOU'RE ABOUT...WHICH IS PRETTY MUCH *YOUR* WHOLE DEAL.
BUT I'M A MAN OF SCIENCE. I DON'T NEED *STINGERS* TO BEAT YOU. HELL, I DON'T EVEN NEED MY SPIDER-POWERS, MAGIC-BASED, RADIATION-BASED, OR TURKEY BASTE.
I JUST NEED KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THE WORLD WORKS, AND IN MY WORLD...
...WHEN YOU MIX NITRIC ACID AND CONCENTRATED HYDROCHLORIC ACID IN A ONE-TO-THREE RATIO, YOU GET AQUA REGIA...
LATIN FOR *"ROYAL WATER,"* SO-CALLED BECAUSE IT'S ONE OF THE FEW REAGENTS THAT CAN DISSOLVE "NOBLE METALS," SUCH AS PLATINUM...

...AND GOLD!
IT DOESN'T LAST VERY LONG, BUT I'M FIGURING IT'LL DO ITS JOB...
...SO I CAN DO MINE!
AND BY THE WAY...
...THAT'S FOR KILLING EL MUERTO'S DAD!

"I SWEAR, I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT'S GONE..."

"WELL, I'M REASONABLY SURE YOU ATE IT ALL, MAY."


I DON'T MEAN THE FOOD, JARVIS, I MEANT THE EVENING.

IT'S JUST FLOWN BY.
IT HAS FOR ME, ALSO.
KIND OF LIKE LIFE, I SUPPOSE. I SWEAR, IT WAS ONLY YESTERDAY I WAS A YOUNG GIRL, JUST MEETING BEN, AND NOW I'M...

I'M SORRY.
WHATEVER FOR?
FOR MENTIONING BEN. IT WAS... TACTLESS...
NOT AT ALL. IT'S NATURAL HE'D ALWAYS BE CLOSE TO YOU.

YOU'RE SO UNDERSTANDING, JARVIS. SO GOOD AND KIND.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I...

MAY?
MAY, WHAT'S WRONG?!
OH MY GOD...
MAY! ARE YOU HAVING AN ATTACK OF SOME KIND?
MAY! SAY SOMETHING!
DEAR LORD, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST! WHAT--?
BEN...?